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Issue 58.5

**THE DREAM**

This is the front cover of

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Staff Box: (In order of appearance)

Jay: Pesky Plumber

Nicholas: Enemy :(

Leo: cunt

J: Meepaw.

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Front Cover: J.E. Cramer

Back Cover: J.E. Cramer

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Policy

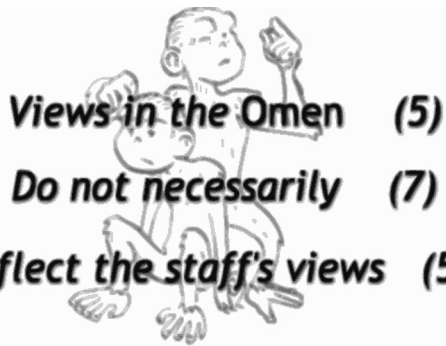
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Find all issues here!



エディトリアル

「『三太郎』の『サンタ』じゃねーぞ。『サンタクローズ』の『サンタ』だ。」

章 レオ、ポッジ ジェイ

英語で、サンタは、「お前らに日本語上手野郎がいる？いないだろう？じゃ、「三」っていう意味は「スリー」っていうことだから、俺は「サンタ」で行こう」と言った。この自己紹介で、サンタの無礼な態度が伝わった。

でも、元の日本語は全然違う。サンタは、「だったら俺は、「サンタ」で行こう。『三太郎』の『サンタ』じゃねーぞ。『サンタクロース』の『サンタ』だ。」

僕たちはこれを聞いたら、精神的に病気になった。こんな馬鹿さを見たことが決してない。今、人生が恒久的に変わった。



サンタヤバイ

# SECTION SPEAK

The Re-Remaking of a College, Chapter 4:  
**On Resentment**  
*or, How to Be the Hampshire You Want to See in the World*  
by Jay Poggi

*Author’s Note: This essay began with the question, “Why are Hampshire students so prone to resenting their school?” Finding the answer took me on a wild and wacky road trip through the dusty archives, poisonous swamps, and asbestos-ridden warehouses of my mind. I’ve returned with what I think is a message of hope. Join me in this, the penultimate chapter of The Re-Remaking of a College, to hear how I lost my faith in Hampshire, how I got (most of) it back, and how schools are just games that our parents believe won’t rot our brains.*

My friend Ida has this unnerving knack for predicting the future. We were talking in the Omen Office one night during my first few weeks at Hampshire when they introduced me to the concept of the “bitter older student.”

They explained that you arrive at Hampshire already in love with it, already having tattooed its utopian ideals on your heart. You spend your first semester or so in honeymoonish bliss, enamored with the view of the mountains, the bonk-silly course titles, and the fact that your classmates seem just as pissed off about capitalism as you are. But it doesn’t last. Spring comes and you still can’t find any game programming courses on The Hub (you’d assumed last semester was an exception); you’ve gotten academic accommodations, but one of your professors isn’t willing to acknowledge them; a political battle is breaking out between the administration and opposed factions of students, and you can barely tell what they’re fighting about, much less who’s right. Your school is struggling, and you do what you can to help. You meet with members of the administration, send out petitions, participate in student government initiatives; but no matter how much of your life-fuel you burn trying to make things right, you never see any evidence of your impact. Your Div III arrives. Soon, you’ll graduate—you’ll be an adult with a degree. But you’re a husk. Hampshire has given you what potential employers might consider an “education,” but it’s taken your soul.

I laughed when Ida finished explaining. Clearly such “bitter older students” existed (I was looking at one), but that couldn’t be everyone’s fate. It couldn’t be mine. I told Ida as much. They didn’t believe me.

And they were right not to. The lovey-dovey opening chapter of my time at Hampshire lasted longer than most, but after a grueling second semester in which I endured academic disillusionment, political upheaval, and social catastrophe, it came to a brutal end. At the start of my third semester, I had grown so weary with resentment that my plucky, idealistic F21-self would have hardly recognized me.

But now, as I approach the precipice at the end of my fourth semester, my Div III looming in the distance, I’m realizing that I’m kind of done hating Hampshire. Don’t get me wrong, I still think it’s a **huge** bit of a mess ~~almost constantly~~ sometimes, but I can with minimal hesitation say that I love it here, that I’m glad I went here, and that I’d recommend other people go here (albeit with a dumptruck full of disclaimers).

In this chapter, I’d like to unravel the gnarly clump of expectations, emotions, and rat dander that

comprises the special sort of resentment that Hampshire students seem so predisposed to; I’d like to share how I made peace with my resentment-clump in hopes it may help some of you do the same;<sup>1</sup> and I’d like to show how, with the power of game design, we can turn Hampshire into something not too far from what we hoped it would be.

## Part 1: The Clumpening

I don’t know about you, but my friends at other colleges aren’t doing so great. They’re constantly losing sleep studying for tests, feeling creatively unfulfilled by their classes, and agonizing over which convoluted combination of majors and minors will give them a course load that’s manageable while still covering all their interests; but despite living in these miserable conditions, I don’t think any of them possess a shred of what they’d consider “resentment” for their schools. Whatever they might feel about their education—apathy, exhaustion, dissatisfaction—they seem immune to resentment, and I think that’s because, ultimately, they got what they signed up for.

I don’t think any of us knew what we were signing up for when we chose Hampshire—I sure didn’t. I still remember the first time I visited this place for a tour and info session in 2017.<sup>2</sup> The dreary, gray weather didn’t flatter Hampshire’s ramshackle campus, and yet as soon as I stepped out of my mom’s car, something about the crisp air and wide open spaces convinced me I was home. In the Kern, the admissions counselor delivered Hampshire’s stance on grades and standardized tests with the proud gusto of a guillotine operator, and my heart screamed with wild, revolutionary glee. Passing under FPH, my tour guide told us about political theory classes with names I couldn’t even begin to understand, and I believed with my every cell that this was a place where you could learn how to change the world.

Imagine my shock when, four and a half years later, I returned to that wondrous, radical otherworld and found in its place, a school.

This, I think, is where the gritty flecks of resentment start to clump. Hampshire markets itself as an anti-college, offering an education to kids who’ve been let down by education. It makes huge, impressive promises while keeping its language vague enough to allow every one of us to construct our own vision of how exactly the school might blow our mind, which sets us up for a sort of reverse whiplash when we arrive and find our brains just as snug and secure in our skulls as before.

This isn’t to say Hampshire’s exactly like any other school. We have an astonishing amount of freedom, both to build our own curriculum, and to *not* build one at all—it’s perfectly valid to spend all your time here messing around and trying different things, as long as you can devise some kind of Div III project that a handful of professors see value in. Our faculty get to teach whatever they want, meaning we have access to courses that no other school has. And while the system is far from perfect, we have what might be one of the only accommodations services in the country actually designed to help students, rather than to just shield the school from accusations of violating the ADA.<sup>3</sup>

Hampshire’s design truly is exceptional, but it isn’t exceptional in enough of the right ways to keep school from really sucking a lot of the time. We still have to deal with ludicrous workloads from professors who don’t seem to understand that their assignments make up just a quarter of our academic responsibilities; while our courses may cover radical subjects, many (if not most) are taught in the same student-initiative-

<sup>1</sup> I’d like to do so while acknowledging that what worked for me most definitely won’t work for everyone. I haven’t experienced the measliest fraction of the innumerable ways people have been hurt at this school, and I do not want to pretend like letting go of Hampshire resentment is something that everyone can or even should do.

<sup>2</sup> I’m old, dude.

<sup>3</sup> I don’t mean to invalidate anyone who’s had bad experiences with OARS. I’m just saying, as a disabled transfer coming from Clark University, Hampshire’s system is so much better it’s not even comparable.



suppressing style found at every other school; and our rigid semesterly course structure can make it hard to catch up when you fall behind.

And then there’s the resource shortages. Finding out that your dream school has a few design flaws is frustrating enough, but realizing it doesn’t offer a single class in your main field of study despite what admissions and the website led you to believe is enough to drive your bananas bananas.<sup>4</sup> Beyond faculty and staff shortages, the residences are in a constant state of disrepair, and the classroom buildings are probably law-breakingly inaccessible, all while tuition remains high.

For these and many other reasons, Hampshire students are bound to wind up disappointed; but if “disappointment” was all there was to it, I don’t think our special brand of resentment would be nearly as pervasive or profound as it is. Hampshire might catalyze the clumping process by failing to live up to our expectations, but we fuel it through our ill-fated attempts to make it meet those expectations.

Part 2: “I can fix him”

I don’t know if you’ve heard, but Hampshire students—we’re a little different. A little quirky, if you will. Of our many distinguishing qualities, I think what separates us most from other students is our relentless commitment to giving a shit about everything. This tendency means that, when faced with our once-beloved school, crumbling and riddled with termite holes, our thumbs refuse to be idly twiddled—they yearn to get dirty working.

What exactly that work entails will vary depending on our values and priorities, but I think it’s safe to say that many of us end up dabbling in some flavor of student advocacy, whether it be through official channels like student government, an organized student movement, or independently via conversations with Ed and co. during office hours.

I’m sure every one of you has either participated in something like this or knows someone who has, and I’m doubly sure that practically none of you can think of an example of a student being satisfied by the results of their work to create change. There’s a painful story behind each of these examples explaining what went wrong, why so much labor amounted to so little, but I think the general truth behind all of them is that most of us have no idea what effective activism looks like, at least not until we’ve already graduated. Thus, we shit-giving Hampshire students are doomed to a cycle akin to a toxic relationship—we give everything trying to make things work with an entity that isn’t willing to give anything back.

As this cycle repeats, our initial disappointment is joined by increasingly hefty chunks of frustration, bitterness, and betrayal, until we graduate with a crystalline clump of resentment jutting out from where our soul used to be.

This is how I ended last semester: soulless and clumpy. But in the past several months, I’ve recovered. I’ve broken out of my self-destructive cycle and found a way to live, learn, and even give back to the community a bit, all while maintaining my health and happiness. I’d like to explain how, but first, we need to talk about game design.

Part 3: The Gamevibes Are Off

I love game design to such an irresponsible degree that it informs the way I see pretty much everything. *The Re-Remaking of a College* might seem like a series critiquing Hampshire’s academic policy and pedagogy, but in my head, I’ve actually been critiquing its game design. This might sound like a terrible idea until you

<sup>4</sup> If this sounds like an exaggeration, talk to a 2D animation student.

realize that games and schools are built from the same basic elements:<sup>5</sup>

**Mechanics** are the set of rules that govern what the player can and can’t do in a game. E.g., Pac-Man can move up, left, right, and down. When he touches a ghost, he dies. When he gets a power up, he can kill ghosts.

**Gameplay** refers to the actions and interactions that emerge from those mechanics when a player plays the game. E.g., a player will cause Pac-Man to maneuver through the maze, pound pellets, gobble ghosts.

**Gamevibe**<sup>6</sup> is the effect that gameplay has on a player’s thinking and feeling, and is the real heart of a game. E.g., a Pac-Man player might feel clumsy, acrobatic, triumphant, or hungry, depending on how they play.

Hampshire, like every other school, fits neatly into this structure. It has mechanics that establish what you as a student can do: you can take classes, both at Hampshire and at the other Five Colleges; if you get permission from your advisor and a faculty member, you can do an independent study; you must take three classes to be considered “full-time;” if you are not “full-time,” you cannot receive financial aid.

Hampshire’s gameplay manifests as going to class, working on assignments, attending student groups, and discovering mice in your oven.

Gameplay as varied as Hampshire’s produces a kaleidoscope of different gamevibes consisting of, well, every sort of way you’ve felt while you’ve been here.

Analyzing schools as games can help us determine whether they’re working as intended. After all, the purpose of a game is not to provide a challenge to be overcome, but to communicate a gamevibe, to put the player in a particular state of mind—I’d argue a school’s purpose is the same. The *Super Mario* games use fluid, movement-based gameplay to elicit simple, playful joy. *Undertale* uses character interaction puzzles to instill empathy and consideration. Hampshire College (allegedly) uses “personalized, independent work,” “close collaboration with faculty,” and “hands-on experience”<sup>7</sup> to “foster a lifelong passion for learning, inquiry, and ethical citizenship that inspires students to contribute to knowledge, justice, and positive change in the world and, by doing so, to transform higher education.”<sup>8</sup>

What makes game design so damn difficult is that you can’t just conjure up gameplay from nothing—you have to write mechanics that you *think* will result in gameplay that you *hope* will communicate your intended gamevibe. The separation between a game designer’s method of input and what the player actually experiences makes constructive feedback more crucial for games than for any other artistic medium. This comes in the form of playtesting, where designers observe someone else playing their game so they can see if their mechanics are having the effect they’re aiming for.

Hampshire’s policies were neither written by game designers, nor playtested; and it shows, because as mechanics, they don’t do a great job of generating the gameplay and gamevibe that the school advertises. Let’s take a look at that promise of “hands-on experience,” for example. I don’t know about you, but I’ve found it surprisingly difficult to find opportunities to learn in a “hands-on” way during my time here, and the fault lies with Hampshire’s mechanics.

Hampshire offers three main academic activities: classes, independent studies, and special projects.<sup>9</sup> Each of these activities counts for the same amount of credits, and all but special projects count toward being considered full-time. In theory, all of these activities could support hands-on learning; but in practice,

<sup>5</sup> This is loosely based on the theory described in Robin Hunicke, Marc LeBlanc, and Robert Zubek’s paper, *MDA: A Formal Approach to Game Design and Game Research*. I disagree with quite a lot of it, but I like the basic framework.

<sup>6</sup> Yes, I made this up. No, I’m not sorry.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.hampshire.edu/hampshire-experience/why-hampshire>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.hampshire.edu/hampshire-experience/mission-and-vision>

<sup>9</sup> RIP EPECs (also I guess you can count field study and study abroad but I’m trying [and failing] to keep this thing short, okay)

independent studies and special projects are often a student’s best or only option. Hampshire classes don’t reliably provide hands-on experience, because they aren’t required to, and because Hampshire doesn’t exclusively hire professors who prioritize it. This might not seem like a huge deal—two out of three activities is still pretty good, right?—but Hampshire makes it a lot harder to register for independent studies and (especially) special projects than for classes. Taking a class is a matter of clicking a few buttons on The Hub. Doing an independent study requires scheduling meetings, filling out forms, and most importantly, finding a supervisor in the form of one of Hampshire’s vanishingly few faculty members.<sup>10</sup> All of this hassle means many students will spend their time here struggling to gain mere crumbs of hands-on experience, while others won’t even try. In other words, the mechanics (Hampshire’s academic policies) fail to result in the intended gameplay (hands-on learning).

Hampshire’s mechanics are in dire need of a rewrite, but that’s a topic for another time.<sup>11</sup> For today, I’d like to focus on what we can do as players to improve our experience within the game as it exists now. Hampshire may not be designed to support the sort of education we’d like it to, but the nice thing about a game is that there’s more than one way to play it.

Part 4: “It’s Not if You Win or Lose…”

Many games have what’s called a “win state,” an ending that occurs once the player fulfills certain conditions. Some win states have a single, straightforward prerequisite like, “defeat the final boss,” while others have a long list of interconnected requirements of varying priorities. It might be tempting to think of a win state as the “goal” of the game, but striving toward that goal is rarely what actually drives a player to play. I don’t play *Zelda* because I want to kill Ganon; I play it because I want to embody a pointy, feral child traversing a fantastic world while screaming at the top of his lungs.<sup>12</sup>

Students attending school differ from other game-players in that they usually are motivated by the win state, because winning (i.e., graduating) awards a degree, a one-way ticket to a life of purpose, fulfillment, and financial independence (ALLEGEDLY). I’m not going to argue whether or not graduation is a worthy goal—heck, for the purposes of this essay, let’s say it is—instead, I want to demonstrate how, by playing Hampshire’s game in our own way, we can simultaneously achieve our graduation win state, make our gameplay experience more closely match the one we were hoping for when we enrolled, and keep our gamevibes relatively resentment-free.

This is really hard to do at most other schools, where the requirements for graduating with a particular major are so strict that they dictate a student’s entire academic life. Hampshire, on the other hand, has some of the fuzziest win state conditions around,<sup>13</sup> meaning we have a lot of freedom to decide exactly how we reach graduation. There’s nothing stopping us from playing Hampshire as a “sandbox game,” or a game where the player’s own curiosity and sense of adventure is valued above external goals.

To unlock Hampshire’s sandboxy potential, you start by learning the conditions of the win state. Graduating entails passing all three Divs, where each Div acts as a sort of baby win state with its own slew

<sup>10</sup> Special projects are similar. For more info, check out Chapter 1 of *The Re-Remaking of a College* on page 16 of Omen 58.1: <https://bork.hampshire.edu/~omen/issues/Omen.58.1.pdf>  
<sup>11</sup> Stay tuned for the final chapter of *The Re-Remaking of a College*  
<sup>12</sup> Rather than defining a game, win states are a sort of courtesy afforded by the designers to the players and themselves, an acknowledgement that our time is limited and linear, that we wouldn’t want to play forever even if we could.  
<sup>13</sup> I was just looking at the Div II requirements as outlined in the Student Handbook (<https://handbook.hampshire.edu/node/35>), and it’s kind of wild how open-ended they are. There isn’t even a prescribed number of classes you have to take; it’s all up to the committee.

of requirements. Once you’ve learned the conditions, you’ll understand what you absolutely have to do and, more importantly, what you *don’t* have to do.

Next, ask yourself what you value besides and beyond graduating. These values define your “playstyle:” they help you decide which academic activities to take, which student groups to get involved with, and how you spend your time at Hampshire in general. Guiding your gameplay with values keeps your gamevibes unrancid and ensures that everything you do at school will have intrinsic value; it’ll matter to you separate from how it relates to your “academic success.” Here are my values, roughly in order of priority:

**1. Health.** I feel like this should be an obvious primary value, but it took me 22 years to really start treating it as such. I’m glad I finally did though, because taking care of yourself actually rules? My “health” value most obviously impacts my relationship with school by encouraging me to, at times, stop. When I’m tired, I go to bed, even if I have work left to do. When I’m not feeling well, I talk to my professors, get extensions, and stay home from class. I try to set aside some time each day to hang out with friends, draw, take walks, and otherwise relax and heal.

**2. Creativity.** I’ve found that creating things is essential not just to my overall happiness, but to how I learn. I can’t learn music theory just by reading about it, I have to compose, and I have to do it over and over again. Valuing “creativity” leads me to take academic activities that allow me to learn by doing (independent studies, classes that emphasize student-directed projects), and keep far away from classes where the students are expected to absorb information solely through readings and lectures.

**3. Community.** This value covers both my desire to participate in community and the responsibility I feel toward my communities. Before I straightened out the priority of my values, I often put this feeling of responsibility over my own health, leading me to put far more time and energy than I had available into various forms of student advocacy. This contributed more to my resentment of Hampshire than anything else. Now, I make sure to only engage in community work in ways that support my health. This series of essays, which I’ve been writing as part of an independent study to ensure it doesn’t encroach on my free time, is an example of me figuring out how to do that. I think it took me so long to get to this point because I was living in a sort of “the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few” mentality—I felt like my health mattered less than the health of my community. I’ve since realized that you can’t actually do much good for your community if you aren’t healthy yourself. This little project hasn’t started a revolution or anything,<sup>14</sup> but I’ve seen consistent signs of it achieving its intended effect, which is more than I can say about anything I tried before I started prioritizing my health.

Having three broad values works well for my brain, but yours might prefer a longer list of more specific goals, or even a single, all-encompassing philosophy. The important thing is recognizing what really matters to you so you can make meaning out of your time at Hampshire—that’s the surefire-est way to free yourself from resentment.

Part 5: Gamebreaker’s Toolkit

I’d like to close with some assorted techniques you can use to achieve your desired playstyle within Hampshire’s sandbox. I’ll organize them into three categories: academics, extracurriculars, and community.

Academics

Independent Studies: I fear I may have reduced my entire personality to “the independent studies

<sup>14</sup> YET



guy” at this point, but so be it. Independent studies are the most powerful tool we have to take control over our education at Hampshire, because **they count as a full course, and they can be literally anything**, as long as you can find a professor who sees the value in what you’re proposing. That might be tricky if Hampshire doesn’t have many professors in your field of study, but remember that **you can do independent studies with Five College professors**.

The most awesome power of an independent study is its ability to **transmute something you’re already doing into academic credit**. I’ve been spending 6+ hours a week on work for The Omen since October of 2021, and I only just started getting credit for it this semester. Don’t be like me. The learning you feel inspired to do in your free time is the most valuable of all, and Hampshire should acknowledge it.

Special Projects: These are our second most powerful tool. Like independent studies, **they count as a full class**, but for reasons logistical, accreditation, and silly, **they do not count toward being considered full-time**. However, because **you can do them at any time of the year**, a summer or winter special project could get you out of having to take a fourth class during a semester.

Special projects are **supervised by someone other than a Hampshire faculty member** who your advisor considers “qualified” to oversee your work. Exactly what you do for your special project is left just as open-ended as with independent studies, but they are most commonly used to support internships and community work.

Communicating with Professors: Many of us come to Hampshire having only ever known the teacher-student relationship as an authoritarian one. Compared to other schools, Hampshire does quite little to establish professors as authority figures through its policies, but when we assume the presence of hierarchy, we end up living it. In my experience, it only takes a few out-of-class conversations with most professors to **establish a different kind of relationship, one based not on authority, but on trust and a mutual desire to learn: mentorship**. A good mentor can be an invaluable source of guidance and support. They’ll help you hone the skills that matter most to you and take chances on your weird ideas.

Even if you aren’t interested in pursuing mentorship with a particular professor, I think it’s still worth getting into the habit of communicating with them frequently and frankly as a fellow human being. Most students (including me) tend to resign themselves to doing everything exactly as the teacher says, even if they find certain assignments too time consuming, too complex, or just not valuable. **We need to break this habit and start talking to our teachers about our needs and concerns**.

Communicating with Classmates: Some classes (like workshop classes) do a great job at creating conditions for their students to build community, but others don’t make this a priority at all. In such classes, students may occupy the same fleshspace a few days a week, but they could easily go the whole semester without forming meaningful connections with each other. I think this is a real shame. No matter the subject, students have as much to learn from each other as they do from the professor. Plus, having a strong community of classmates by your side can make communicating concerns about the class a lot easier. To that end, I think **every class should have a student-run Discord server where we can plan meet-ups, work on assignments together, and generally support and encourage each other**. I’ve been in one class where someone did this, and it really helped to make us feel like *classmates* and not just separate people who happened to be learning the same thing. In order to make this the norm, we’re all going to need to assume it’s our job to make the server until someone else beats us to it.

**Extracurriculars**

Earning Credit for Your Work: If you’re spending a lot of time on student group work, **make an independent study or special project out of it**. See Chapter 1 of *The Re-Remaking of a College* on page 16 of Omen 58.1 for more info (<https://bork.hampshire.edu/~omen/issues/Omen.58.1.pdf>).

Delegating Responsibility: If you’ve taken on a lot of responsibility in your student group, **consider**

**asking for help**. You and your co-signers don’t have to be the only ones bearing the burdens of running your club; you might have some regular members who’d be able and willing to share some of the load.<sup>15</sup> Also, **staff in Student Engagement can help in more ways than you think**. If you’re struggling, don’t hesitate to talk to Rachel.

**Community**

Avoiding Student Government: Student government positions present themselves as the most direct way for a student to enact positive change in the community; they give you regular access to administrators, a reliable meeting schedule, and, if you’re lucky, money. What they don’t do is give you any real power at all.<sup>16</sup>

You’ve probably seen the emails going out about the charter for the Student Advisory Board, the latest successor to Hampshire’s long lineage of dead student governments. It would take me a whole other essay to unpack all my feelings about the charter, so I’m going to focus on just one point: the proposed SAB would have a whole bunch of student positions, each with their own responsibilities, but the most power the charter ever imbues them with is the power to “advocate” on behalf of students—or, in honest-speak, the power to politely ask the administration to meet our needs (which last I checked is a power we already have). The obvious limit with this supposed “power” is that the administration can just say “no.”

Unfunnily enough, the charter probably ended up like this because of that exact limit. I sincerely doubt that the drafting committee, comprised of students who earnestly wanted to create a student government that would serve the needs of the community, wrote the charter that we’ve been asked to vote on.

Administration-sponsored student government fails to serve as an effective vehicle for student-driven change, because it is designed to restrain us, to make us think that power is something we need to ask for.

Direct Action: The truth is that students already have all the power. Our tuition is literally the only reason this school still exists. The only limit on what we’re capable of is our belief in Hampshire’s “game.”

Even when students organize independently to push for change, they often fail because they’re still acting within Hampshire’s mechanics. So many movements focus on bombarding the administration with emails, petitions, and meetings,<sup>17</sup> but this only reinforces the status quo established by Hampshire’s rules according to which the administration has the final say.

Ask yourself, “What was the last student-led movement at Hampshire that unambiguously got what they wanted?” and you’ll realize that real change means breaking the game. 🦋

<sup>15</sup> I still sometimes forget that the designation of “signer” doesn’t mean anything outside of assuring a club’s eligibility for funding.

<sup>16</sup> At least not since I’ve been here. I think Community Council may have been different, but that was long before any of our times.

<sup>17</sup> This includes me! I just wanna own that when I’m criticizing various forms of student advocacy, I’m criticizing myself in the past.

# Max’s Theory Vortex 0.1

by Maxwell Gamboa

*A new series in which I (Maxwell Gamboa) post any curiosities that I find myself asking while around campus! Responses and theories are always welcome. Send me your response through email (mag22@hampshire.edu) and I’ll respond back!*

## Volume One - Broken Egg on My Window and Physics

### Introduction

I had decided from a very early age that science was not for me. The last time (before I came to Hampshire) I enjoyed science was when in second grade my class sang the Water Cycle song. I learned about the water cycle while mimicking a long country drawl.

Then as I got older, science became less fun. Rather than teachers encouraging you to ask questions (even if they were wrong), they expected you to grasp onto a scientific concept immediately. There was no room for *why* we were learning these concepts, it was more so ‘this is what is in the textbook and the district doesn’t pay me enough to actually care.’

I learned, more so by the reaction of my teachers, that science was just long paragraphs on old textbooks.

When I hear comments that Science is useless in the ‘real world’ I understand that perspective. I felt very similar to math when I was in high school.

When scientific theories become scientific *facts* described with complicated words and left as just that, no one really wants to learn more about it. What else is there to look at?

Then I discovered something exciting while at Hampshire.

Science is (and will always be) a mess that we *try* to understand by theories. Whatever category of science; before it became the gospel truth it was just a theory.

I have some theories on how a cracked egg ended up on my windowsill.



So like any scientist, I first asked: HOW THE FUCK DID A CRACKED EGG GET ONTO MY WINDOW

Second (without even realizing it!) I was doing scientific deduction while staring at the broken egg. Here were my deductions:

- The egg immediately reminded me of a grocery-bought chicken egg; the eggshell was a bright white and the yolk was many that I’ve seen fried in a pan
- It did not splatter my window because there was no egg residue on it
- The egg was snugly in the corner, so it could have been thrown at an angle
- The egg was fresh, not rotten, so my neurodivergent ass didn’t miss this egg behind on my windowsill for a while

I haven’t cleaned off the egg yet, because that would require me to remove my window screen, and I would never admit on paper to removing a part of campus property (plus removing a window screen takes too much work; I’m a Hampshire student not a Home Depot Dad)

So since the egg stares at me when I approach my window, and I’m growing weary of opening my window as the day passes, I’ve come up with some theories on how the egg got there.

### ***Theory One - As Above, So Below (In Merrill A Tower Specifically)***

So, considering that the egg had to fly in from somewhere, one of my theories is that it dropped down from the floor above me (Merrill A4).

My brain had some rebuffs.

- There is no lounge balcony for Merrill A4 that is right above my room; so it couldn’t have fallen from there. It could have been dropped from the room above mine
  - If it was from the room above mine I theorize the person would have to move the screen and really lean over their windowsill for it to hit mine.
    - If they dropped it down the egg would whizz past my windowsill because the windowsills line up when you stick your head out
    - If they threw it to hit my window without leaning down then there’s a good chance the egg would hit my window because you’d have to throw the egg towards my window than just dropping it downwards

I hope this theory isn’t true because then that would open a whole can of worms on why someone wanted to throw an egg out their window to hit mine.

### ***Theory Two - Icarus the Egg (but the sun is my window)***

Someone had to throw the egg from the ground and it hit my windowsill. The physics of this I am more unsure of, as I theorize the angle of the egg being thrown would have to be complicated in order to hit the corner of my windowsill.

Again, my brain has counter theories.

- If someone were to throw an egg towards the windows then the average result would hit the window rather than the windowsill
- The egg would have splattered, and there was no egg residue on my window, the only residue is from the yolk itself because the egg cracked



Conclusion

At first I was pissed that there was a broken egg on my windowsill; but I am now so filled with theories on how it got up there proving to be quite entertaining.

What do you think? How did the egg get on my windowsill? There are no good or bad theories in science, and I reply to my email quickly (mag22@hampshire.edu).

Science can be an academic paper, and it can also be a college kid wondering why an egg ended up on zyr windowsill.

Question everything guys, trust no one’s word for it, stay curious.

From your science hippie,  
Max (ze/they)

***P.S.** - Seriously email me, I don’t bite, and I really want to hear theories other than my own as how the fuck the egg got up there. Sending me theories through snail mail also works (My box number is #0509 - you don’t need to pay postage for sending mail within Hampshire College), if you send me physical mail I will respond back if there is a mail address provided. 🙄*

interlude  
by willow watson

unfortunately, i have been terribly busy for the last two weeks, & as a result i was caught totally unprepared for this issue of the omen, with insufficient time to write something that i could be proud of. instead, i will be submitting an existing piece of my writing i thought was genuinely funny, both for the sake of sharing it & saving myself time. it is a reworking of an interaction i had with a friend into a short seinfeld stand-up bit, & while i will admit it is less funny on paper, i think that imagining it in jerry seinfeld’s voice, with audience laughter & background music behind it, really elevates it to the point that it could be considered somewhat amusing. i hope you enjoy! the writing is as follows:

“you think aliens ever get tired of these ufo sightings? i mean, after a while, it’s gotta be lonely if you’re always an *unidentified flying object*. i mean, lights in the sky, blurry photographs, those are ufos. but wouldn’t you think a real spaceship is a little bit past that? \*audience laughing\* can you imagine if a flying saucer beamed you up, & the aliens just started pleading to you? ‘we came all the way out here to abduct you! we’re little green men! you & i both know what’s going on here, now will you stop with the ufo?’” 🙄

through today  
by Lucas Brisbois

The coffee pot is on. The smell eases you awake.  
A mug of swirling caffeine, sugar, and cream.  
This will get you through today.

The chatter from cubicles over floats away  
as you walk through the painted double-doors.  
You bring the cigarette to your lips.  
Not inhaling, but holding the smoke in your mouth.  
You wonder what’s going to kill you first.  
This will get you through today.

The casino PA is playing that pop song you’re secretly fond of.  
The ice in your drink swirls as you tell the dealer to hit.  
House wins. It always does.  
You toss back your head and finish your drink.  
It scratches your throat.  
This will get you through today.

The strap on her dress has fallen off her shoulder.  
Your hands tremble,  
like you’ve never touched her before.  
Lips begin to hug skin.  
You are hungry,  
as if you’ve never eaten before.  
This will get you through today.

The hospital cafeteria is empty.  
She always said the egg salad was the best.  
Your sandwich sits on a paper plate,  
half-eaten.  
It is the best sandwich you’ve ever had.  
This will get you through today. 🙄



# Pondered writings

by Clay Kesling

**summed up**

Meandering across the depths of life so tenderly and methodically. A journey through the sadness, the madness, the happiness, the struggles, the moments that pass so quickly we can’t even notice them slipping by, the years we can’t remember, the griefs we face, the differentiating perspectives, the innocent beginnings, the curiosity filled thoughts, the aching and longing for comfort, the coping, the deep blossoming necessity to understand the misunderstood, the tiny gestures we do to make others feel safe and loved, the mechanisms we create to feel our feelings sanely and insanely... All of these infinite things. All of these infinite moments. Seconds. Minutes. Hours. Days. Weeks. Months. Years. They all add up to us... Our human existence...

**tree**

Deeply embedded roots, baut I may fall  
Vibrant un-diseased leaves, but I may fall  
Birds nesting, building homes, but I may fall  
My inner self protected by tough weathered bark, but I may fall  
Sitting alongside other trees, but I may fall  
Strong winds, lightning crackling, storms stirring, saws rumbling, neighbors dwindling, disease spreading... I may fall  
Upon this uncertain scape of existence I may fall... but today I breathe the fresh air and spread my roots into the soil

**anybody?**

Just seconds of eye contact and my heart skips a beat,  
I am happy to be seen. To be acknowledged.  
My vocal cords frozen. Unable to conjure thoughts or words.  
I want to say hello. I want to smile. I want to see underneath the surface. To discover.  
These wants are met by doubts. Doubts that hold me back.  
So I wait. I wait to see if you may talk. If you may look in my direction. If you may smile.  
These moments pass...So I wait... for when one day, I can speak. Or you can. 🙊

# SAB Charter Voting

by Zukiswa Mhlongo

Please vote on the charter for the newly established student governing board for the student body of Hampshire College. This will impact your life as a student. Do you want a designated student identity-based representative? Do you want to vote each year for students to campaign for student government or nominate students every two years or vote from a selection of staff elected student workers. Should Fundcom (aka your club food money) remain separate (controlled by the college instead of the students) or be reintegrated into the student body. Do you want to add or get rid of positions? Where do you think the paycheck for these positions should come from? Literally any and all opinions are welcome! Please vote because we don’t want students to feel misrepresented. Don’t you sometimes wish you could rewrite or add to the US constitution sometimes. Well this is the constitution for the student body of Hampshire College. Link down below but this link is also present in emails that have come/will be coming your way shortly.

[https://hampshire.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_8BXmrPtLOLCUph4](https://hampshire.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8BXmrPtLOLCUph4)

If you are confused about anything in this document, feel free to email me, Zauyah and I’m sure anyone else who was listed as being involved in the drafting committee.

My email: [zmm22@hampshire.edu](mailto:zmm22@hampshire.edu) 🙊

# Things your RA wants to say to you but can't (until now)

by Casper Binnett

I'm genuinely not acting, or lying, or pretending. I think you're all very cool. I am bad at faking enthusiasm so trust me when I say that even if you and I aren't the best of friends I am happy you're here and I think it's very neat that you're doing your own little thing as our paths have crossed. They couldn't pay me any amount of money to make me as happy as I am when I see you. You're all brilliant people.

Yes, I do think it would be funny if you unplugged our fridge, tipped it on its side and filled it with boiling water to make a bathtub. Baths are amazing, I take them almost daily and they last hours. It helps my joints not hurt so much from my severe hypermobility and also reminds me of my Oregon (very wet all the time) roots. It's also basically cosplaying as a frog which is MAYBE our mascot. Unfortunately if you do that I'll have to explain that to my boss, Ben, and while he's very patient with me is he THAT patient? (Also do you really wanna bathe in a receptacle that smells that bad?) (Also PSA: the wellness center has bathtubs for folks to use I believe!! If you need a tub for joint pain or relaxation hit them up!)

I do not hold grudges against you when you violate policies. I know I'm a little stiff on rules, I really believe in fairness in that sense, but I'm so so happy that all of you seem to know it's never personal and we continue to have a good relationship. No amount of minor policy violations will ever make me think you're a bad person. That's police shit, and that ain't me.

If you're one of the 3 dozen "honorary residents" I've adopted in addition to all of my own, I love you like my own residents and will help you in the same ways. All you have to do is ask.

Thank you all for being so nice to me. I know coming to college and having an RA who looks like they're shaking in his little boots sometimes doesn't inspire confidence always. Especially when he's always overestimating his own capabilities, and never shuts up about Pokemon, his boyfriend, and his novels. I think we had an extremely good semester all things considered.

Yes my boyfriend IS real- Merrill's thin walls and hearing other people just stresses him out so he's not over often. Also my bed isn't hooked up with a fat enough therapeutic pad for his old man joints. He's amazing and my best friend and thank you for all listening to me gush about him (not that you had a choice)

Cigarette butter haunts my dreams. It's kinda funny? But I'm still just full of questions.

Condom socks also do. I can hear your lubed feet slapping the ground in my nightmares. What the fuck.

God I'm still salty about the hot water. I really am. It was such a drag. You're all such fucking troopers for that one. The school hasn't really said it clearly so I will on their behalf: I'm so unbelievably sorry that happened. That was mega shit. I like my hot water :((

Thank you all for helping that really short notice Grilled Cheese Night happen. I was having a very hard time and I love grilled cheese very much.

Thank you for coming to events. I know you're busy, I know I nag, but they are very fun! (Also it makes me look good to my boss) (also also I get to spend school money on things to spoil you)

If I ever said I'd do a non RA favor for you that I never did I'm so sorry hmu and I'll see if I can buy you a Kern Coffee for the trouble I am very busy, have severe ADHD and lose things often.

Yes I do know who smokes In my halls. Yes I am frustrated. Not at you for smoking, but because we have many disabled students, it's a health issue, an inconvenience to your neighbors, a fire hazard, AND I have to fill out paperwork when it happens. I am very busy, very tired and very stressed out and do not want to fill out more paperwork because you couldn't be bothered to go outside.

I want to hold you all hostage in a room and give you a seven hour power point presentation about the history of competitive Pokemon. TCG, VGC, and how I'd personally rebalance things. (Jk) (kinda)

If I see you at the DSA I love you so much. You're not smoking in the halls!!!! Thank you!!!! I should start giving you all cookies.

For all the residents of mine that signed condoms and slid them under my door that one time for kicks, yes it was very funny but my boyfriend was visiting for a change and almost slipped on them. I saved them all and they live in my sock drawer. Makes me look like a sexually active person (lol)

Yes my sleep schedule is wild, and I feel like I run into the same five people every day and some people never. Two of my direct neighbors I swear I've only seen twice this semester. Some of my residents on other floors? All the time I'm passing them. I swear I'm around!!!!

If you've ever had a class with me, I formally apologize for the whiplash. I know I was never the serious, stoic kind of RA but I'm sure you were not ready for my level of frothing and vibrating in response to International Short Fiction. Or my opinions on the kinks of James Bond based on the most awkwardly shot scene ever in 2007s Casino Royale. Or me not knowing how coding works that well only to make a bunch of fucked up things because horror is my corner and I cannot fix this.

No you are never bothering me when you text me. I put my phone number on my door for a reason. I am incredibly flattered how many of you reached out when you needed help and very happy to be of service! I'm always here for you!

I want you all to know that I think all of my coworkers are very cool- and I have no idea how to talk to any of them because they're all TOO COOL, you know? (They're not, I'm just very nervous) so never say "Casper is so good at being an RA!" Without knowing I'm the strangest, most anxious little goblin during trainings.

I genuinely find helping others to be healing. If I am busy and stressed and overwhelmed, it HELPS to fix problems you have. I took this job because it's good for me, and I hope good for you.

I cannot wait to be a neurodivergent loser about all these things I love so much with you for hopefully two more years

I love the memories I've made with you. "Best wishes" "Casper your RA Casper" "Merrill Resident" "Red 18" "Morbin Time" "condom socks" "cigarette butter" all of these wonderful things we've made genuinely brings me joy. I genuinely couldn't have asked for better residents. My residents next year have some serious shoes to fill. (PS: The Room is getting a remake!!)

Best wishes,

Casper, your RA Casper 🐉



# SECTION LIES

## An Acrostic Poem About Chuck McGill from The Hit Series Better Call Saul (2015-2022)

by J. E. Cramer; foreword by Pierce Docherty

“a”  
-Pierce Docherty, unprompted

~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~\*~

Chuck McGill  
He has never been to Easter Keg Hunt  
At least I assume he hasn’t  
Really, I feel bad for discounting the possibility outright, but if he did I feel like it would have had a  
Lasting  
Enough impression on him that he would have mentioned it at least once, even  
Some years later during the events of hit series *Better Call Saul* (2015-2022). I would  
  
Like to observe Chuck McGill at Easter Keg Hunt, because on one hand  
It might do him some good to have an okay time in the woods so very early on a Sunday morning;  
however, I would  
Not rule out the possibility of my fighting that old man, which would probably be  
Disastrous for both of us,  
Because I have taken a turn for the worse physically as of late, and he is of an advanced age.  
Even so, I would be willing to join him in the Pit and play a needlessly contentious and academically  
Rigorous  
Game of  
HRock Paper Scissors so he and I could enjoy the contents of the Fight Keg.  
  
My hypothetical day at Easter Keg Hunt with  
Charles Lindbergh McGill would hypothetically end with us  
Going our separate ways once more, but with a deeper understanding of one another on a professional  
and personal level. He would,  
I expect, not like to return to another Easter Keg Hunt, but who knows? I don’t. Maybe he doesn’t  
either. Can anyone rea  
Lly know anything? Just something to consider.



# WHOA WHOA, LITTLE BRO!

MAJOR SPOILERS FOR  
THE VISUAL NOVEL SLASH  
ADVENTURE GAME,\*

SKIP TO PAGE 26,

NINE HOURS,  
NINE PERSONS,  
NINE DOORS

OR

ARE COMING  
YOUR WAY!!!!

\*WHEN I SAY MAJOR I MEAN LITERALLY THE WHOLE GAME!! I AM NOT FUCKING AROUND, TAILS!!! YOU F



THIS IS YOUR LAST FUCKING CHANCE  
I'M SO FUCKING SERIOUS IF YOU PLAN ON  
PLAYING ZEROESCAPE:NINEHOURS,NINE  
PERSONS, NINE DOORS EVER IN YOUR  
LIFE AND YOU CARE ABOUT SPOILERS AT  
ALL YOU SHOULD NOT BE HERE. LEAVE

also kiro is my oc and i like them and if you insist on staying to read this  
you WILL be subject to my brainrot idc

santaro

by Leo Zhang

Three semi-bored semi-kids lounged about in their living room, going through terrorism plans with as much excitement as if they were watching paint dry. They’d already talked about the plans extensively, but they agreed that it would be best to go over them all together every once in a while, just to make sure they all still remembered.

Aoi, in particular, liked to entertain himself by going on tangents about Santa Claus. The kids expected that at least one of the participants of their Nonary Game would suggest the idea of codenames—either Seven because of his police instincts, or Ace because he didn’t want anyone to know he was Gentarou Hongou—so of course, Aoi and Akane thought of codenames for themselves, too. Akane’s was June, a reference both to her future bracelet number and to the doll Junpei gave her so many years ago. Aoi’s was Santa, also relevant to his future bracelet number, and personal to him due to the role he played in Akane’s life after their parents died. Her very own Santa Claus. (Of course, Kiro wouldn’t need a codename. They were going to be Zero, and that was pretty self-explanatory.)

Aoi got bored easily. Of course he knew the merit of going over their Nonary Game plans, he was smart enough to know that. It was best for them to drill their parts into them, to the point that it would be natural for him to be Santa and for Akane to be June. But that knowledge didn’t help the gut-twisting, nausea-inducing *boredom*. So, as a fun game for himself and only himself, every time he went over how he would introduce his codename, he added something about Santa to the end of his statement. *Santa, like Santa Claus. You know, the cookies and milk guy.* or *Santa, like Santa Claus, or Saint Nick if you’re a square.* It made both Akane and Kiro roll their eyes, but in an affectionate way. It made them giggle just as often.

On this one specific day, Aoi was lying upside down on the couch, his legs resting on the couch’s back while he let his head dangle over the floor. Akane sat at the table, and Kiro had themself draped over a lounge chair, sitting sideways and kicking their feet absentmindedly. They were running through the plan again: Aoi would likely emerge first, with Kubota, Seven, and Lotus. They would reach A Deck around the same time as Clover, Light, and Hongou, as well as Junpei. Akane would show up last, and shortly thereafter, Kiro would start playing the Zero announcements. That would send the group into pandemonium, and once they realized they were stuck in it for real, they would have to decide on names to call each other so they could work together.

“I’ll be Santa,” Aoi droned, his voice strained by his upsidedownness but still remarkably bored.

“Like Santa Claus. You know, like... uh...” His brows furrowed together intensely as he realized he didn’t have a dumb joke lined up this time. He’d already used the Saint Nick thing. Coal and cookies ceased to be funny after two uses. He was *not* going ‘ho, ho, ho.’ There really wasn’t a lot of material he could get out of Santa Claus after years of doing this bit.

Akane eyed her brother cautiously, and started to speak. “...I’ll be—”

“Akane!” Aoi called, his eyes shut in concentration. “Let me think.”

Akane clenched her fists, and it was clear she was dangerously close to walking over and pushing Aoi’s legs over his head so he’d do a backwards roll off the couch.

“Hmm, I’ve already done the elves thing, and the ‘good boys and girls’ thing. What could I... Hm...”

The living room was mostly silent as Aoi thought aloud, until Kiro spoke up, sounding almost as bored as Aoi. “You know, Aoi, going with the name Santa, someone could think it’s a short version of the name Santarou. You may wanna avoid that.”

They’d said it dryly, clearly sarcastically, but Aoi’s eyes widened and he swung his legs down to be able to face Kiro properly. “That’s it! I have to tell them that I don’t mean Santarou!”

Kiro stared at Aoi incredulously, with both vague amusement and complete and utter exhaustion lining their face. “Aoi, I was joking.”

Aoi was pacing now, hand under his chin like he was thinking about something deep and philosophical. “No, no, but you had a point.”

“No, I— No I *didn’t*. What are you talking about? *No one* is named Santarou anymore, and— and also, no normal person is going to think you mean—”

“It’s perfect!” He swung his arms out wide, with the sort of mania that usually only came about when he had a cool idea and too many cups of coffee. “Throws people off their game, and makes my intro a little more interesting. Thanks, Kiro! You’re the best.” As if to emphasize that they were, in fact, the best, Aoi rushed to their side to ruffle their hair, which made them yelp in surprise. “I think that’s my final choice. That’ll be the one I use when the real one comes around! ‘I’ll be Santa. Not like the ‘Santa’ in ‘Santarou,’ but like the ‘Santa’ in ‘Santa Claus.’ It’s perfect!”

Kiro’s face tensed, their lips pulled into a frown. “Tell me you’re kidding.”

“Nope. Sorry to say I’m not.” He grinned down at them, and they were suddenly struck with the reminder that he knew exactly what he was doing. That maybe some deranged part of his brain really did think the Santarou thing made sense, but either way, the choice to incorporate it into his script was a knowing and deliberate act. He wanted to inflict that psychic damage on everyone. But they still held out hope that he was dumb enough for this to be a joke.

---

“Then I’ll be Santa,” the white-haired boy declares, after the huge mountain of a man decides to call himself Seven. The boy wears a smug smile on his face. “Not like the ‘Santa’ in ‘Santarou,’ ’kay? Like ‘Santa Claus’ Santa.”

His statement is followed by a few beats of confused silence.

Isolated in a different part of the building, Kiro watches the introductions on one of their many monitors, cross-legged on their chair with a lollipop in their mouth. When they hear him speak, they have to resist the urge to turn on their microphone and say, ‘*Never mind, guys. Game canceled. Everyone go home.*’ Instead of doing that, they bury their face into their hands and let out a pained groan of secondhand embarrassment. One straight from the gut, holding all of their exasperation and disbelief.

“He said it,” they whisper. “He actually fucking said it.”🐼

# WHOA WHOA, LITTLE BRO!

MAJOR SPOILERS FOR  
THE VISUAL NOVEL SLASH  
ADVENTURE GAME,\*

LOOK NOT UPON  
PAGES 24 AND 25,



NINE HOURS,  
NINE PERSONS,  
NINE DOORS

UNLESS

peaks blast!

DWELL ON  
THE PREVIOUS  
PAGE!!!!

\*LITERALLY EVERY TWIST! SPOILED! IS THAT WHAT YOU WANT?? WOULD THAT MAKE YOU HAPPY??? YOU FU



*Section Hate*







30 Fun things to buy at Big Y, by Nicholas Utakis-Smith



31

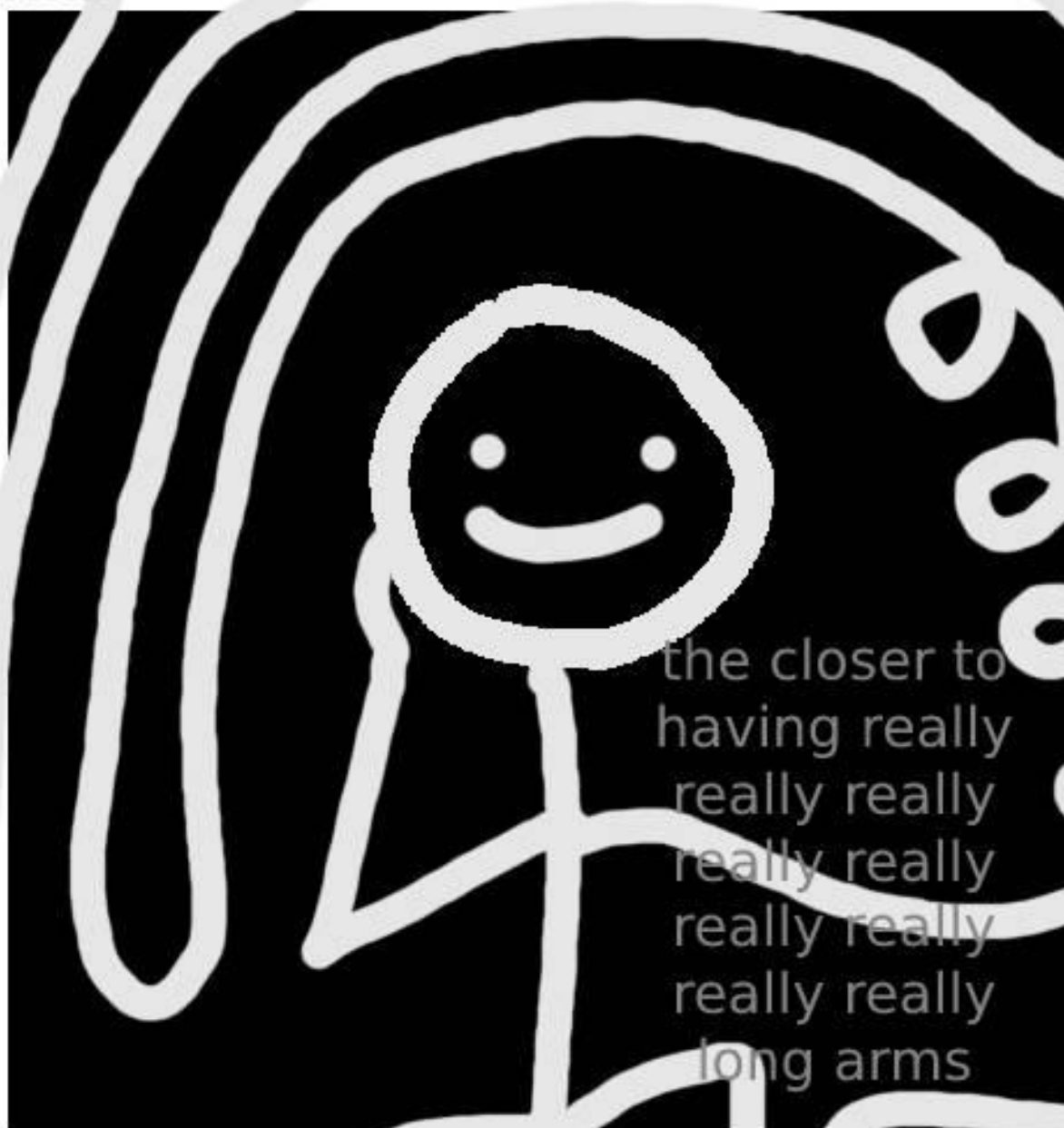


This is the front cover of

# THE OMEN

Issue 58.5

the  
longer  
the arms



the closer to  
having really  
really really  
really really  
really really  
really really  
really really  
long arms